

THE WAGGON
AND THE STAR



BY
MARY SINTON LEITCH

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The Waggon and the Star

*The
Waggon and the Star*

By
MARY SINTON LEITCH

"Hitch your waggon to a star"
Emerson

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The Waggon and the Star

*'Twas fine for Emerson to say
Inspiring things, I know,
But stars are oh so far away,
And waggons very slow.*

*Mine rumbles clumsily along
On earth, altho afar
'Tis held by silver ropes of song
Firmly to a star.*

TO “HIMSELF”

•

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THE POET

*In the darkness he sings of the dawning,
In the desert he sings of a rose,
Or of limpid and laughing water
That thro green meadows flows.*

*He flings a Romany ballad
Out thro his prison bars
And, deaf, he sings of nightingales
Or, blind, he sings of stars.*

*And hopeless and old and forsaken,
At last with failing breath
A song of faith and youth and love
He sings at the gates of death.*

THE RIVER

I cannot sleep ; — the beautiful Lynnhaven
Floods thro my thoughts tonight.
Past darkling pines it moves and willows weep-
ing
In many a cove and bight.

I cannot sleep because it gleams like silver.
Altho my eyes are sealed,
Clear to my vision are its dusky shallows
And starry depths revealed.

Slowly it moves, and in a mystic silence,
It draws me wondering,
Out thro its shadowy portals to the ocean
Where sails are blossoming.

On, ever on, to strange and far adventure
On waters wide and deep
The river bears me thro the fragrant darkness,
And so I cannot sleep.

AN EGOIST AT LYNNHAVEN

The lilies of France are wilting,
But here in pain's despite
The willow leaves are liting o'er the river's
liquid light.
The roses of England are bowing
In grief o'er many a grave,
But here star-flowers are showing and green
marsh-banners wave.
Afar great thrones are falling
And Famine stalks the lands,
But here Delight is calling to Lynnhaven's
shining sands.
If God needs my compassion
For the sad world's tears and sighs,
Why flaunt in ruthless fashion such beauty be-
fore my eyes ?

THE PAGAN

Thinking to shrive me in the solitude —
By all my folly and my failure spent —
Steeling my heart against the sight and scent
Of tender spring, I sought the cloistered wood ;
But Nature, scornful of my chastened mood,
Across my vision flung a jasmine flower ; —
How could my thoughts with such a golden
dower

Go clad in garb of nun or Quaker's hood ?
Lest even the yellow jasmine be withstood
More snares were set. Not only far around,
About, above, did loveliness abound ;
A firmament of blossoms starred the sod !
Fie on you Pagan Nature, thus to make
Mock of a sober mind for beauty's sake !

SHADOWS

The poets croon to the orbèd moon
Their lays, — and their praise they bring
To Apollo, the sun, the all-glorious one,
In song as an offering.
They sing to the stars, to Venus and Mars —
Votaries all, of light —
But who of them sings to the shadows,
The offspring of day and of night ?
Who of them sings or a tribute brings
To the shadows more lovely than light ?
A spire of darkness, solemn and still,
Is the cedar's shadow on the hill,
No matter how the wind may try
To shake its brooding dignity.
The sycamore's shadows are dancing feet —
Myriads of them, delicate, fleet,
That never advance and never retreat,
But leap and frolic while breezes play
In the whirl and swirl of a French ballet.
The pine trees' shadows are woven lace
Filling the woods with an eerie grace —

Mechlin and Cluny and fine Guipure
Such as the knights and ladies wear
In paintings of Coques or Lagillière ;
Not even Sir Walter Raleigh spread
A carpet so rich for his queen to tread.

The shadows are etched on the lawn and
sketched

On the marsh where the lilies blow ;
Thro the crystal glass of the river they pass
Far down to the silence below,
Where many a faëry tower and dome
They build to give my thoughts a home.

Let others sing to the sun and bring
To the moon and stars their offering !
To the gentle shade my songs be sung
Whose mantle over my heart is flung,
To the quiet shade whose hush is laid
On my spirit's stress !
For me full meed of happiness
Is found in gazing on woods and meadows
And weaving fantasies out of the shadows.

ON BEING ADVISED TO FILL IN MY SWAMP

Only a swamp ! Yet the inhabitants
Speak in the tongue of Aristophanes !
Brekekekex, ko-ax, the guttural chants
Are borne to me upon the evening breeze :
Without my frogs the night would be too still,
The cry too lonely of the whippoorwill.

All day the long deft fingers of the light
Are weaving patterns in the river reeds.
Adventurous snails climb to a perilous height
To view the world from swaying grass and
weeds,
And insects dart about on azure wing.
They think a swamp is a delightful thing !

It is a painter's palette, for the sun
Mixes his colors there ; and there the fog
Creeping about hangs gems on every one
Of all the myriad grasses in the bog.
You city folk may call it drear and damp ;
You have your pavements — let me keep my
swamp !

TO MY FATHER

“ Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,
Die Seelen denen ich die ersten sang.”

Goethe

In other years my heart was glad and young,
The month was always May,
But, tho my throat was all a-throb with song,
You bade me — “ Hold ! Delay
The while that you, who know not anything
Of life, nor height of joy nor depth of sorrow —
May live to-day and on a distant morrow
Then you shall sing ! ”

You who had cared to listen now are gone,
To a far country sped,
Where other voices sing to you — or none —
Among the quiet dead.

Would that my voice a starry way could wing
To you who had for my sake loved my song !
To win the ear of an indifferent throng
Why should I sing ?

Oh, but my songs are prisoned birds and wild !
They beat resistlessly

Within my heart, untamed, unreconciled
To their captivity.

The bud does not today cease burgeoning
Because the flower must bloom unseen to-
morrow ;

My soul is over-charged with joy and sorrow
And I must sing !

CRUSADERS

I see a great procession sweep along :
Crusaders these in shining armor. Tho
They go they know not whither, yet they go
In brave array, a proud and plumèd throng.
Their trumpets sound and streaming flags out-
flung
Challenge despair and doubt and overthrow.
And still they march, and still they do not know
Whither or whence — or why their song is
sung !

And tho all moving in the van are lost
In shadows, others sweeping onward seize
The fallen flags and, singing, wave them high.
What privilege is mine with such a host,
Ever renewed thro time's immensities,
To march and sing my hour beneath the sky !

THE OWL

In the woods last night I saw an owl.
Now Father says he was just a fowl
Like all the hens in our kitchen yard ;
But don't you know, it's awf'ly hard
To believe that creature was only a bird !
He stared and stared and never stirred,
But once he gave a solemn wink —
A sort of weird and uncanny blink —
As tho he would say it was very absurd
That I should imagine that he was a bird.
He was old and withered and huddled and
grey ;
I felt so creepy I stole away.
I'd never dare to tell Mamma
That he looked just like my gran'papa !

THE PRICE

I

If you should love me, all my life were spent,
Dearest, in loving you ; your kiss would
seal

My lips and silence would their message
steal.

For, to a woman's soul, less eloquent
Ambition is than love ; too full content

To live in you, no longer I should feel

My pulses throb an answer to the appeal
Of Fame, and so my loving would prevent
My larger living : therefore, dear, to-night,

Stretching to God weak arms that yearn for
you,

With lips that tremble for your kiss, I pray
That He will lead you from me to the light

Of other love ; that, while you fade from
view,

I may have strength to turn my face away.

II

Dearest, I turned my face but still my eyes

Held clear the vision of your passing slow :

I stopped my hearing to your voice, but lo,
Still my heart heard your pleadings and your
sighs !

Methought that little arms in tender wise
Clung to my neck — ah, to have held them
so ! —

Then loosed their clasp and, soft, there
seemed to grow

And, lingering, die, as music lingering dies
Afar, the sound of little pattering feet

That paused — and passed. With a great
cry — “ Then this,

This were the price ! ” — I turned to you ;
oh, fast

Enfold me, for my life is full complete

If I do naught but love ; that loving is

The larger living, now I know at last !

THE SECRET

The woods have their secrets but I know one of
them !

I have surprised a little pool among the cold
bare trees,

Silent as moonlight lying

On the chill marble of a Venetian palace court-
yard.

The winter, stripping the woods of their shelter-
ing leaves,

Betrayed its hiding-place.

So peaceful was it I felt a rude intruder

And crept away, treading softly on the soft
pine-needles.

It was a little pond but it held in its bosom a
vast stillness

And the shadows of three cedars.

THE DEAD THRUSH

Is anything so dead as a dead bird ? —
So poignantly, so pitifully mute
The tender feathered breast no longer stirred
By song that, more than viol, harp or flute,
Could fill with dear delight the heart that heard.

Lovely the wildwood was today and lush
With flower and fern till, on a mossy bed
Beneath my feet, I saw a hermit thrush ; —
A singer of celestial song was dead ; —
And suddenly from tree and flower and bush
All fragrance and all loveliness had fled. . . .
The twilight falls and all the delicate hush
Of evening vibrates with the music sped.

SUN-RISE

Oh how we loved to see the sun arise —
Ofttimes in very thunder
Of light — on strange horizons ! How your
eyes
Would fill — would flood — with wonder !

Full many a crimson dawning on far seas
Have we watched, love, together ;
Behind tall palms or pines or olive trees ;
On hills of purple heather.

But now unwelcome is the breaking light,
For now it comes concealing
Your beauty that the darkness of the night
Had been awhile revealing.

In vain I hold you close ! In vain I hide
Your face ! The dawn comes creeping
In at our shuttered window to your side
And takes you, gently sleeping,

Out to the church-yard. There beneath the
flowers
Where you have long been lying —
Ah, dear, so long ! — you stay till night's still
hours
Again disprove your dying.

THE MAGIC GOWN

I long to see the fairies, the fairies, the fairies,
Will someone tell me where is
The place the fairies dwell ?
I long to see the fairies, the fairies, the fairies,
But where their hidden lair is,
Alas, no child can tell !

Now Mother sang this little song
After I went to bed,
And so I lay there sleepily
With fairies in my head.

I wonder where their lair is,
I thought : — without compare is
Their queen, so very fair is
Her face, and gold her hair is ;
I rather think her chair is
A mushroom and her stair is
A jasmine stalk ; her wherries
Are nautili ; her dairies
Are milkweed ; all her care is
To keep the little fairies
At work, as each one's share is
In gathering slugs and berries,
Moths, caterpillars, cherries,

For such their dainty fare is : —
I'll go on " counting sheep " ;
Perhaps in Dreamland there is
Some way to catch the fairies ;
Perhaps some trap or snare is
The means, tho such a scare is
Not good for little fairies . . .
But here I fell asleep.

Now old Jemima Jones, the cook,
Had left beside my bed a book.
'Twas open and I seemed to see,
Tho in the dark, this recipe ;

" Get satin from the shining grass,
Silk from the river's sheen,
And velvet from the mullein leaf
Of soft and radiant green ;
A long pine-needle and some thread
Of spider's web as well,
And weave a dress whose loveliness
Shall serve you as a spell :
At red moon-set or pale moon-rise
You'll be unseen of fairies' eyes,
And so within the woodland wild
You'll find them tho a mortal child."

Across my face the moon-light crept ;
Exultant out of bed I leapt.

But then, alas, I struck a light
To see if I had read aright.
Yes, open there the cook-book lies,
But not to gowns of magic sheen
All fashioned of the forest green : —
Dull recipes for lemon pies
And stupid puddings greet my eyes !

Farewell then to the fairies, the fairies, the
fairies,
For none can show me where is
The place the fairies dwell.
I long to see the fairies, the fairies, the fairies,
But where their hidden lair is
No waking child can tell !

THE OLD MEN

At the edge of Point Graymalkin the pines
stand —

Old men, dark against the sky.

They fling out withered arms knotted and
gnarled,

Threatening the river with frantic gestures,

Impotent, grotesque,

Daring it to trespass on their woods.

The water, all unheeding, rises . . . and
falls . . .

And the arms wave in triumph,

For the old men believe the river slunk away

In fear of them.

A HUSBAND TO A WIFE

Tell me, my dearest, that your love for me
Is dead, then turn and look into my eyes.
You still shall find a share of Paradise
Has lingered there, for there you still shall see
My love for you. I shall not utter sighs
Or plaints, and standing coldly, quietly,
I shall not touch your hand or hair, nor be
Your lover, for my love will make me wise
And strong to be your helper, and to hide
My sorrow and my pain. Not hand in hand
Into the morning, as true lovers might,
But — tho apart — together, side by side,
Because we share one grief and understand,
Let us walk bravely forth into the night.

ON BEING TOLD THAT MY CHILD RESEMBLES ME

I would not have you of my fashioning
Sweet child — not yours these hands that
 spill the wine
Life proffers ! You, with steadier grasp than
 mine,
 Shall lift the chalice high ;
Shall drink and, drinking, sing
 The song that on my lips would never reach
 the sky !

Not yours these faltering feet, these strain-
 ing eyes
That cannot see the stars for mists of earth !
Oh, naught have I to give you of my dearth !
 For your clear gaze shall see
Beauty thro all disguise,
 And winged shall be your feet like those
 of Mercury !

Yet for your voice of sweetness and of power
My voice shall set the key ; my candle-light
Shall fire your torch to flame thro all the night.
 Be, dear one — if you must
Be aught of me — the flower
 Of all my aspirations, blossoming from
 their dust !

ONE ROSE

I cannot bear the beauty of one rose,
Therefore, I pray you, give me two or three —
A nosegay of them, that my eye may be
Distracted and not linger over-long
On one : its heart holds too much mystery :
Within it burn the holy vestal fires
Of all the world's deep longings and desires :
All loveliness is there ! So soft among
Those tender petals such perfection glows,
I cannot bear the beauty of one rose.

THE FLOWER

I

I saw you in a shadowy dell
Where one wild rose — one only — grew ;
That rose my heart remembers well.
I saw you in a shadowy dell ;
I gazed and gazed, but could not tell
Which was the rose and which was you !
I saw you in a shadowy dell
Where one wild rose — one only — grew.

II

When all the world was sweet with May
(But now alas, it is December !)
We plighted troth. That blithesome day
When all the world was sweet with May
A warbler sang a lyric lay
Above us ; — ah, do you remember
When all the world was sweet with May ?
. . . But now alas, it is December !

III

You are too delicate a flower
To gather for a lover's breast.
Then bloom your frail and fleeting hour !
You are too delicate a flower ; —
I leave you in your woodland bower
Where passion's wind will not molest.
You are too delicate a flower
To gather for a lover's breast.

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

“ My love, your eyes are veiled and sad.
You grieve for Youth — her dancing feet
And all the lightsome ways she had ;
But still, tho yesterday was sweet,
To-day too may be glad.”

“ What matter whether sad or gay ?
One moment we may laugh or pray
And lo, today is yesterday ! ”

“ But tho, with all its joy and sorrow,
To-day so swiftly comes and goes,
Yet future joy is yours to borrow ;
The birds will sing, the buds uncloset.
Rejoice then in to-morrow ! ”

“ Ah, whether skies be blue or grey —
Come song or silence, March or May,
To-morrow will be yesterday ! ”

“ Then, since to-morrow fades so fast
Into the shrouding mists that lie —

Impenetrable, chill and vast —
About to-day, thro memory
Live in the happy past ! ”

“ The happy past ! I say you nay !
For yesterday alas, alway
Is sad because 'tis yesterday.”

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Stratford, the while I pace your streets, I see
Naught of the throng to whom to-day is
dear ;

For it is yesterday is precious here.
Upon the breeze is borne sweet Portia's plea
For mercy ; Ariel sings, and Antony
Summons me back to weep at Caesar's bier.

Macbeth and Hamlet, Bolingbroke and Lear
Rise from your storied stones and walk with me.
Then, on a sudden, I must halt, my breath
Stifled with feeling ; — this the very air

That Shakespeare breathed ! Mid tender
meadows lying

Yon Avon smiled upon his life and death !

Ah, Stratford-Town, my heart can hardly
bear

To realize thus his living and his dying.

THE SUMMIT

“Why should you seek to scale Mount
Everest ? ”

They cry who blind and dreamless cannot
know

What fires of glory and of splendor glow
Upon that lonely height, who think the crest
And summit of the world a waste of snow,
A wilderness — no more, who have not guessed
It is the Peak of Vision where the quest
Shall end with stars and suns to crown the
brow.

Oh, I shall laugh to see the moon arise
And look upon me with a startled gaze !
Monarch of earth, invader of the skies,
Triumphant I shall sing my diapase.
While far below men crawl in clay and clod,
Sublimely I shall stand alone with God.

THE CHILD OF THE CHILDLESS

(A woman with the traces of great beauty in face and form stands before an open fire in the twilight, gazing into a mirror on the mantel.)

THE WOMAN :

The snow is on my hair and the swift sap
Of summer in my veins is stopped by frost.
By my own will I am childless.

(The form of a beautiful child that, like a Botticelli angel, might be either boy or girl, appears. The firelight is seen shining through the transparent form.)

THE CHILD :

Mother ! Mother !
Did you not hear my cry on the night wind
Of yearning to be nested 'neath your heart ?

THE WOMAN :

I heard — ah, yes, I heard, but would not
 heed.
Oh, but to carry in my body now
The fluttering promise of that sweet fulfilment !
For I who feared to suffer should rejoice
The while I beat the air in agony.

Let heaven and earth meet in a flame of pain
If milk but come to burn these barren breasts !

THE CHILD :

Out of the silence brooding on the sea ;
Out of the clouds that swept across the moon ;
Out of the tender heart of every rose
I called to you to give me flowers and dawn,
Sunset and evening star and pain and love.
I called to you : you heard and did not heed !

THE WOMAN :

Oh, come to me, my hands are over-flowing
With roses now and they are all for you.
You shall have stars for playthings, and my
 beauty
That I so feared to spend, I'll give to you,
And he for whom I guarded it will love it
The dearer spent than hoarded.

THE CHILD :

 It is past —
Your beauty ! Altho hoarded, it is spent !
The stars you might have given were in your
 eyes —
Youth, hope and faith — these are ex-
 tinguished like
A candle in the wind, and see, your roses
Are crushed, the petals fallen thro your fingers.

THE WOMAN :

I have no gifts — it is true ! My hands are
empty

Of rose and star. Yet come un-gifted ; come,
Yourself the giver ! Music of pattering feet,
Of childish laughter, bring into this stillness
That aches about our house and in our hearts !

THE CHILD :

I cannot cross the gulf that separates
My soul that should have been from yours
that is.

THE WOMAN :

I can no longer bear — yet I must bear —
To see within the eyes of him I love,
Tho, loving, I refused him the one gift
That most he craved, the pitiful surrender
Of our once-dear tomorrow. While we sit
And listen to the clock that ticks away
Our solitary hours, we doubt and fear
Lest now to-day is our entire possession.

THE CHILD :

Alas, you would have had in me, your child,
An immortality to grasp and hold
Incorporate against all doubts and fears !

THE WOMAN :

And now forever I shall hear you call !

THE CHILD :

Yes, I shall whisper in the rustling leaves,
And I shall sob low in the washing waves,
And I shall weep whenever falls the rain ;
For now I am but an immortal cry
Of longing that shall drift a-down the wind :
Yet the mysterious light of the still moon
Shall search me out — a wraith — and give me
being
Unbearable to your un-childed heart.

THE WOMAN :

Oh to be spared the silence, with your voice
Piercing it thro — crying “ It is too late ! ”

THE CHILD :

It is too late ! . . . Mother !

(The firelight becomes gradually more brightly visible thro the form of the child, and as it disappears the arms may last be seen stretched out toward the mother in anguished entreaty.)

THE WOMAN :

(Starting toward the vanishing figure, then sinking into a chair with a strangled cry.)

My child ! . . . My child !

TO AN AUNT ON HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

Haggard and bent, with slow and weary pace,
Have eighty winters passed you. Creeping
 nigh
They held out withered arms that seemed to
 try
To fold you in their harsh and cold embrace ;
Their fingers only brushed your hair and face.
But eighty summers, lightly tripping by,
Have clasped you and enwound you lovingly
With garlands of their beauty and their grace.

Great-hearted daughter of great-hearted sires,
In vain the years besiege you and assail !
Your youthful spirit holds its banners high.
Since in my blood smoulder the self-same fires
That flame in yours, when I would faint or fail,
“ Nobless oblige ” shall be my rallying-cry !

WERE YOU BUT DEAD

Were you but dead,
That yearning of the arms that clasp the dark
When, in the hush of long night hours, I hark
For Memory's whispers — even that agony
Were sweet if Memory still could comfort me ;
But Memory's sweetness is forever fled.

Were you but dead !

Were you but dead,
Some golden-rod from your gold hair might
grow,
A wild blush-rose from your cold cheek might
blow,
And all the fragrance of your grave would steal
Across my heart and make my senses reel
With past delight till present pain were sped.

Were you but dead !

Were you but dead —
Ah, then mayhap no longer I should crave
The sensuous sweetness of your grassy grave,
But, all my passion purified, should feel
Divinest love my anguished spirit seal,
For then from heaven my starving soul were
fed.

Were you but dead !

THE SUPPLIANT

Your sin came knocking at my heart :
I bade it stay outside.
“ If I receive and harbour it,
Love is profaned,” I cried.

Oh fast I locked and barred the door
Until at last I knew
That, holding it against your sin,
I held it against you.

No more I heard that knock, and you
Were silent in your pride. . . .
My trembling fingers on the door
I laid and flung it wide.

Your sin — poor, suppliant, shivering thing —
Warm to my heart I pressed,
And unafraid and unashamed
It shelters in my breast.

SAILING-SHIP DAYS

The roach was in the galley and the rat was in
the hold,
Not to mention what was in your bunk at
night,
And the weevil in the biscuit —
Well, you simply had to risk it,
To shut your eyes before you took a bite.
What mattered rat or weevil or any such-like
evil
When the muscles rippled underneath your
skin
As tho they'd all been oiled,
And your stomach was un-spoiled
And could easily digest a sardine tin ?
What mattered anything with those great
white sails a-swing,
While " Set the cross-jack, boys ! " or " Top-
sail haul ! "
Boomed out along the deck,
Or you gaily risked your neck
To clear the buntlines fouling in a squall ?

I'm master of a steamer now and crew of forty
men,
And I never hear a proper sailor's damn.
I've officers, not mates,
And we've bread-and-butter plates
And "serviettes" with hem and monogram !
But I'd forfeit every button on my uniform to
put on
Once again the rags and tags of Jacky Tar :
My shiny boots and collars
And my many monthly dollars —
I'd give them all to sight the Northern Star
'Twixt sagging sails that sway up and down the
Milky Way
Or, filling, fling defiance to the gale.
I'm a gentleman in steam,
But I'll never cease to dream
I'm again a ragged sailor lad in sail.

SAND SAILORS

The boat on our beach is bedded in sand ;
Some storm has lifted her high on the land ;
 Like the sieve of the famous Wise Men Three
 She's as full of holes as a boat can be.
Now Father says this kind of boat
Is very much safer that will not float ;
 But he does not know how far I go !
Way over the main to the land of Spain
In an hour I voyage and back again.
 To far Peru or Kalamazoo,
 To India, China or Timbuctoo
I sail, and the gale may howl, and the hail
May lash, my vessel can never fail
 To ride in her pride, her wings spread wide,
 And she cannot sink whatever betide.
I have a crew that is staunch and true —
Brother Johnny and Barbara too.
 They think like me that a ship on the sea
Is not so nice as a ship on the land,
Hard and fast in our own beach sand.

IDOLATERS

If once again the great Gautama came
To impious earth, what grief were his to find
That men have made of him, whose lofty mind
Had fired the torch of truth with searching
flame,

A graven image only with the name
Of Buddha — wood and stone, grotesque and
blind !

They worship that ! Like chaff upon the wind
The truth is lost, Gautama put to shame.

If you returned, oh Man of Galilee,
And saw your idol that our hands have made ;
If you gazed sadly on us as we bow
And scrape before it, should we also flee
Out of our temples, stricken and afraid,
As fled the money-changers long ago ?

NIHIL NISI BONUM

They say his heart was low and vile and base ;
But I know only this : — I saw his face
When spring's first shy, sweet violet met his
 gaze
 Blue-peeping from the soft and leafy shade.

They say his mind was base and low and vile ;
But I know only this : — I saw the smile
That hovered wistful round his lips the while
 The great Un-finished Symphony was played.

They say his life was vile and base and low ;
Little I know of him, but this I know : —
I saw his tears well up and overflow
 Beside the grave where his old dog was laid!

THE VICTORY OF THE WOODS

“Come on, Elijah ! Forward, march !” I
cried

One winter’s morning to my serving-man
Whose threescore years and ten had only made
His swing more sure in wielding of the axe ; —
“Come, shoulder arms ! We’ll have a tilt
with lance

And bayonet — your axe, Elijah — ’gainst
The trees and shrubs that press upon my house.
Tho Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane
We’ll drive it back !” Elijah, proof against
All classical allusion, understood
Enough to lift his axe . . . I bade him stay !
“Lige, I forgot the eyrie in this oak.

Year after wandering year the self-same eagle
Returns to this same nest — the tree’s a
palace,

The home of a great king, and heaven forbid
That we should raze a palace to the ground ! ”

Elijah grumbled out his Bolshevistic
Disdain of kings. “This cedar here,” he said
“Is dour and sullen ; a pall-bearer could
Not look more darkly.”

“Yes, I thought to let
The cedar fall, but see, a yellow jasmine
Has leaned her ladder up against the trunk

And when June comes that glowering cedar will
Mysteriously bloom in golden flowers."

"Well then," said Lige, "I'll cut this slattern shrub."

"What ! Laurel, Lige ? Why, laurel greets
the spring

With the first bridal blushes of the woods !

It brings the sunrise down to earth for us !"

"This willow then," he said, "for all men
know

A weeping willow is a worthless weed."

"Perhaps, and yet she bathes her slender limbs

Throughout the winter in the river there ;

You must admire her courage. When the May

Decks her in green, she weaves the daintiest
shadows !

They dance so lightly that my heart is filled

With joyance : we will let the willow live.

But this tall holly is too near my door.

It pricks and tears at me and casts a shade

Where most I need the sun . . . Yet wait," I
cried,

"Lijah, this holly burns ten thousand tapers —

Perhaps for the salvation of my soul !

And verily, it is my burning bush

From which God speaks to me as once he spoke

To Moses. You and I will not commit

A sacrilege upon it ! Let it stay !"

Lijah was baffled, but he persevered

With a fine patience :— “ Here’s a rotten stump ;

You won’t save this ? ”

“ No, surely I can pass
Sentence of death on one old rotten stump.”

The old man’s axe was eager. . . .

“ Hold ! ” I cried :—

“ A stay of execution ! For I see
A mesh of stems enwound about the trunk —
Virginia creeper with its silent promise
Of summer beauty, Nature loveably
Hiding unlovely things in loveliness.”

The old man, muttering his disapprobation,
Pointed to masses of low scraggy bushes
Of huckleberry spoiling all the sward.

“ Well then, I’ll get my hoe and grub up these :
My axe don’t seem to be much use today.”

“ Oh, Lige, forgive me ! We must leave the
shrubs !

They bring the thrushes to my very door
To prink and preen ! These huckleberries gone
I lose the sober-coated thrushes too ! ”

So poor old Lijah mumbled a good-night
And trudged despondently away, no doubt
Brooding in silence on the queer mad ways
Of gentry ; while I passed along the path
Uncouth with straggling bushes, to my house
Darkened by shadows of importunate trees.

MY COMFORT

Dearest, if such a love as we have known
Should e'er forgotten be,
What gain of new delight could then atone
For this to me : —

That I should deem love but a fragile rose
Fast fading while we dream ?
Better grief's darkness since that darkness
knows
Vision and gleam : —

Gleam of the star of faith that shall defy
Time's slow forgetfulness.
Remembering you, my comfort be that I
Am comfortless.

TO A CHILD THAT LIVED BUT AN HOUR

I have felt your lips like a delicate flower —
Like rose-leaves — on my breast.
I have had my hour, one life-long hour,
I have known the end of the quest,
And sorrow is mine forevermore
But never the old unrest.

Tho tears forever shall blind my eyes,
Yet peace shall seal my pain,
For I know why the lily blossoms and dies,
Why the moon, tho it wax, must wane,
I know why stars were lit in the skies : —
On my heart a child has lain.

THE MODERN GOD

Jehovah, ancient God of Israel's race,
Our fathers' God, is God no more, for we
Have dragged him from the sky while Calvary
Loomed black against it, smearing on his face
The horrid leer of Moloch, the grimace
Of Ashtaroth that all may know that he
Is but a god of old idolatry ;
And now Ourselves we set up in his place.

I fear that heavenly radiance will beat
Too hot upon our foreheads, and that down
We shall come hurtling like some circus clown
Who ventures up too high for foolish feet.
Then there will be at last no God at all.
Better perhaps have Ashtaroth or Baal !

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Here on my verandah the clematis
Fills the air with its spiritual fragrance
And the rich black grapes hang clustered
In lustrous promise of ruby wine.
But yonder I see thro a cleft in the mountains
That frame it in grandeur —
Softened by the tender mists of distance —
The Battlefield of Gettysburg.
And, sudden, from the swinging censers
Of the delicate spiritual clematis,
Issues the penetrant odor of incense,
While the cluster of grapes that I hold
Stains my palms with blood.

WAITING

One gesture had sufficed — one look of mine —
Last night, and you had clasped me to your
 breast.

But I, tho fearing you had seen, had guessed,
How deep I drew my breath lest you divine
My love and longing, gave nor look nor sign ;
Lightly I spoke some gay and trivial jest
With lips that trembled. Fain they had con-
 fessed

That all my hopes about your heart entwine !

Until you love me not alone when eyes
Are lit with moonlight making lovers blind,
Not with a restless, a tumultuous mind
But with a calm sure passion that defies
The searching day ; until you consecrate
A peaceful heart to love, I watch and wait.

I NEED NOT SEARCH THE SKY

I need not search the sky for stars ;
Down in the leaves and mould
The checkerberry blossoms shine
In constellations that I hold
 More intimately mine.

I need not look to heaven for all
My share of heavenly grace
The while, my love, you smile on me.
More mine the rapture in your face
 Than aught in heaven can be.

THE SONG OF THE SHELL

Mold me — a high-explosive shell —
Carefully, deftly, shape me well !
With lyddite and with mellinite,
With fulminate of mercury,
Fill me, fitting me for flight —
My one wild flight of ecstasy
Such as the bee's that weds the queen.
Oh, make me sure and swift and keen,
For tho I wait thro years of peace,
Yet war at last shall bring release
From restless, dull captivity.

In some far land beyond the sea
A mother holds upon her knee
The victim pre-ordained for me.

Methinks I see her ! Firelight gleams
Within her eyes that fill with dreams.
Oh, little recks she now of wars !
She sings while peaceful shine the stars : —

“ The owl may hoot, the bat may flit
Without ; I hold you warm and close,

Wee, tender thing, and exquisite
As are the petals of a rose."

(How I laugh to hear her sing !)

" Wee, exquisite and tender thing,
Hush you ! See, the firelight dies,
But the love-light in my eyes
Is light enough for lullabies.
Hush you, sweetling, hush and rest
Safe and warm on Mother's breast ! "

And I, the high-explosive shell,
While she sings am molded well
And deftly, and triumphantly
I fling my song across the sea
To the babe upon her knee : —

" Your flesh as pink as rose-leaves — oh,
How I shall tear and mangle it !
That innocent throat — the blood shall flow
And fill and stop and strangle it !
And you shall lie in agony
Beneath a pale and pitiless sky.
Above you, waiting till you die,
The vultures — ravenous — shall fly,
The while I rest within your breast,
The end and goal of all my quest."

I sing . . . and, soft, the baby sleeps.
It is for me the mother keeps
Her watch ! For this her hopes are high
While low she croons her lullaby : —
“The owl may hoot, the bat may flit
Without ; I hold you warm and close,
Wee, tender thing, and exquisite
As are the petals of a rose.”

Aha ! That mother does not guess
The song that I, the bullet, sing !
Her voice is sweet with happiness : —

“ Wee, exquisite and tender thing,
Hush you ! Hush you, darling ! Rest
Safe from harm on Mother’s breast.”

SEEN IN PASSING

Brick walls and a few square feet
Of dusty and squalid yard
Where a poplar tree dies hard
And a bird is singing sweet.

At a broken pane I see
An ancient crone who sits
And patiently, hopelessly knits
“One two, two three, two three.”

Then sudden the bird that sings
Hushes her mumbling tongue,
Gives to her heart its song,
Gives to her soul its wings.

For an instant the poplar tree
Sways on a shining strand
And the song is sung in the land
Of love — her Lombardy.

And then the withered lips once more
Are mumbling, “One two three and four.”

WHOM GERMANY REFUSES TO HONOR

(An appeal in Germany for funds to keep up as a memorial to Goethe a house in which he had lived, met with almost no response.)

Oh Germany, you crown a Hindenburg,
A Treitschke, a Bernhardi, and refuse
The laurels to your most illustrious son !
He took your harsh and dissonant syllables
And tuned them to such beauty that the soul
Is borne on waves of deep melodious sound
To vast and dim cathedrals ; organs peal
Sonorous with the sorrows of the world :
Or, soft, a myriad unseen fingers sweep
A myriad harps, and hidden choirs hymn,
White-stoled, in voices virginal and clear.

Amid the rack and tumult of the time —
The discords of your inharmonious days —
Unheeded is the singer, and his song
Is silent. . . . Hark ! I hear his music still,
Stealing thro ruined aisles and crumbling
arches
Of mighty temples that are dark, deserted,
Save that the pale and pitiful listening moon
Touches the broken altars wistfully.

TO MY MOTHER

Your form is dim ; your hands, your brow,
 your face
Are lost, and only some elusive grace
 Remains of you for memory to prize : —
A fluttering bit of lace,
 A ribbon — oh, the past is pitiless
And will not yield you to my aching eyes !
 Is this forgetfulness ?

Mother, not so ! For your escape is of
The body, not the spirit, and my love
 Holds you — forgotten — intimately sweet,
And precious far above
 The need of flesh to keep remembrance
 true.
Forgotten ? — Ah, my very pulses beat
 In memory of you !

TO ROMAIN ROLLAND

(Who Remained "Above the Battle")

You stand a lonely figure on a height
That reaches to the stars. About you rise
The stench and smoke of war's grim sacrifice.
To Baal, whom men call God — the God of
 might —
Their altar fires flame red upon the night.
You gaze and deep compassion makes your
 eyes
Tender with tears for men's idolatries.
They consecrate with song and solemn rite
War, tho it scourges, tho it crucifies
Beauty and loveliness and all delight.
And you, great soul, clear-seeing anchorite,
You they assail with harsh and bitter cries —
But unavailing. War at last shall cease
And men shall worship God — the God of
 peace !

CHARLEMAGNE

(Charlemagne was buried sitting upright on his throne, robed and crowned, his sword at his side.)

He sits beneath the dust of conquered worlds
Clothed in imperial robes, his restless sword —
The terror once of Arab, Saxon, Moor —
Held in that last cold grasp of lifeless clay.

How must that spirit, tortured by the sight
Of crumbling empires, struggle to break free !
How must that hand, once glorious in the strife,
That death alone could conquer, strain to lift
The sword and save the kingdom from its
doom !

And yet he moves not ! On his shadow throne,
While muffled sounds of kingdoms falling
strike

His earth-clogged ears, he reigns among the
shadows

Until with wide unblinded eyes he see
All thrones and crowns lie broken in the dust.

THE KISS

I

(*To the Maid*)

You call me thief ! I stole a kiss
'Tis true, and yet 'tis hardly fair
That you — *particeps criminis* —
You call me thief ! I stole a kiss,
But your bewitching fault it is
For wearing rose-buds in your hair.
You call me thief ! I stole a kiss
'Tis true, and yet 'tis hardly fair.

II

(*To the Bride*)

I kissed the maid and little guessed
That lips could yield this draft divine.
That stolen kiss was but a jest :
I kissed the maid and little guessed
That thus from wedded lips is pressed
A richer, rarer, ruddier wine !
I kissed the maid and little guessed
That lips could yield this draft divine.

III

(To the Wife)

No kiss of maid or bride endears
Like this, fulfilled of faith and truth,
That has withstood the blight of years.
No kiss of maid or bride endears
Like this made up of smiles and tears
Of age, my love, as well as youth.
No kiss of maid or bride endears
Like this, fulfilled of faith and truth.

THE FORGOTTEN GRAVE

I would not know the spot where Phebe lies
In some still churchyard ; earth and sky
and air
Are full of her, and ever, everywhere,
I feel her presence, sweet and strong and wise.

But should I look upon the silent mound,
The stone, the flowers, my thoughts would
linger there
While to my soul the voices of Despair
Would whisper — “ Lo, she lies beneath the
ground ! ”

By others' tears the sullen sod be wet
That covers the dear hands and eyes and
hair !
Ah Phebe, tho I lay no roses there,
It is the grave alone that I forget !

TO THE MODERN SPIRIT

You say that old beliefs are all out-worn,
Old creeds outgrown ; and yet you cannot show
That thorns of doubt have pricked upon your
brow

One gracious drop. If your un-faith were
born

Thro travail of the soul that left you shorn
Of mockery ; or if the overthrow
Of ancient altars caused your tears to flow,
Baptizing, cleansing, ridding of all scorn
Your unbelief : — ah, then it were a thing
That men should honor, reverence, not despise.
But no ! You care not if old truths be lies !
You grieve not that the vault of heaven should
ring

With empty echoes of our prayers and cries !
While sacred temples burn, you dance and
sing !

TO A FLYING-FISH

Of bird and naiad you are born, a sprite
Of air and ocean, wild and glad and free !
When white sails wing me o'er this warm delight —

The southern waste of lone cerulean sea —
My heart leaps up whene'er in riotous flight
You dart from watery realms of faery.

An envious diver hides her feathered breast
A moment in the waves, but you surprise
The cool green secrets of the sea unguessed
Of gull or mortal. Then, in magic wise,
You change, and from a billow's curling crest
A bird, you sweep into the startled skies !

Whene'er the spendthrift moon her treasure
flings
Over the waters, many a priceless gem
You snare within the meshes of your wings
That flash and shimmer, flare and flame with
them —
Such emeralds, sapphires, diamonds as kings
Have never worn in royal diadem.

What tender lullabies does ocean croon
In azure depths ? Do nymphs and nereids
smile
Upon you sporting in the surges strewn
With streaming stars, cleaving your course
the while
Mid tall sea-flowers that swing and sway and
swoon
Against the pillars of a coral isle ?

A bright unerring arrow from the quiver
Of some mermaid you are swift up-slung.
I watch the ocean mirror crack and shiver —
The sparkling fragments to the breezes
flung. . . .
Alas, such ecstasy as yours forever
Eludes both human heart and human tongue !

THE WINTER WOODS

I love the sober winter woods — the trees
 With their clean trunks and boughs that,
 clear and bare,
 Are etched against the blue, with, here
 and there,
A nest more silent for the memories
Of song it holds. I love the calm, the peace,
 That broods upon the frozen earth and air.
 Summer is wanton, taking thought nor
 care
For bird or flower, and giving no surcease
 Of beauty till the soul is surfeited.
 To me the voice of one sweet feathered
 bard
Who lingers when the rest have taken wing,
 One leaf that flames mid others dry and dead,
 One winter violet, is more reward
 Than all the wealth that summer days
 can bring.

THE PASSING OF TOM CHAMPAGNE

It is but yesterday old Tom Champagne
Went reeling past this house as yonder ship
Reels in the offing. Some three years ago
He came, a battered derelict, and cast
His anchor in our port. None ever knew
Whence he had come or who he was or what
The name he bore. He boasted that his gait —
A limping lurch and roll — was consequent
On wounds won at the battle of Champagne.
He must have meant a bottle of champagne
Some wag remarked, and so the neighbors called
him

The name that made him butt of many a jest,
Both for the battle's and the bottle's sake.
And yet the while they jeered they envied him
His knowledge of the whereabouts of each
And every still in all the county round.
He swore he knew naught of them, yet he knew
Enough to keep his nose forever red,
His legs unsteady and his hands a-tremble,
However dry the place or sly the police.

Well, Tom went lurching to the country store
Only last night, to have the usual jests

And banter flung at him. He stood inane
And simpering there, with sagging mouth that
told

The story of his sin, with bloated cheeks,
Empurpled veins, and eyes like window-panes
In a dim, haunted house — a thing obscene
He was with not a spark of manhood in him.
Then, suddenly, with a low, stricken cry,
He fell . . . lay still . . . old Tom Cham-
pagne was dead!

And all the free-flung jests and jeers were
changed

To whispers full of awe and reverence.

Tom, who had been one instant past a creature
To spurn, to spit upon, was now become
A holy thing, and in the hush that lay
Upon him brooded mystery ineffable.

The eyes that, open, had been all unseeing
Seemed, sealed, to see : gently the eyelids
closed

On knowledge calm, transcendent, absolute.

The face which, but a moment gone, had been
A crumpled parchment that the hand of evil
Had blotched and blotted, now was changed,
transformed

Into a white illuminated scroll

On which was writ a Sign inscrutable.

We gazed awe-stricken in the flickering light
Ringed round with darkness. And when
Arbuthnot,

The keeper of the store, brought out a piece
Of sacking to throw over the still form,
We stayed his hand and sought a strip of
linen —

The whitest, finest, to be found, and that
Was spread upon him, tho it only served
To make more still the awful stillness of him.

Well, I must go. We bury him this evening.
Why should we wait to give him to the arms
Of Death ? Life made him subject of a sneer,
But Death has won respect for him at last.

POINT OF VIEW

When earth seems dark with envy
And hate and greed and wars,
Remember — to the distant
Inhabitants of Mars
It flames upon their vision
A star among the stars !

TO A KING-FISHER OR HALCYON

It's very queer when garbed like that
In fine dress-suit and white cravat
To dive into the brook !

I'd think that such a bath would hurt
Your beautiful white-bosomed shirt
And yet you always look

Quite freshly starched. No bird before
Had ever such a pompadour
As you, you funny imp.

Why dive for fish when you have bugs
And gauzy flies and juicy slugs
And those delicious shrimp ?

You have the strangest kind of note
That ever came from feathered throat —
It is not song at all,

But just a rattle, yet your true
Devoted wife, as she should do,
Pretends you're musical.

And you repay her flattery
By treating her with gallantry
As tho you thought it fun

To housekeep with her by the stream
In that lush bank, — your days I deem
Are truly halcyon.

COMPENSATION

When wild-plum blossoms fail and fall,
The dogwood breaks in delicate spray
Against the forest-green, and all
The sweet wood-lilies breathe of May.

When golden bells of jasmine peal
No more with silent song, we have
The laurel beautiful to heal
The hurt the jasmine's passing gave.

And when the laurel's blushes fade
And, sighing, we would say — " Too soon
Does beauty perish " — 'tis unsaid
For lo, the crimson rose of June !

And, roses lost, the holly tree
Flames against winter's icy breath.
Thus when your love shall pass from me
May Nature solace me with death !

THE INCONSISTENT PEDLAR

“ Oh who will buy a sceptre,
Or who a cast-off crown ?
Who wants a royal signet-ring
Or an ermine-bordered gown ? ”

Down many a busy city street
I hear the pedlar cry
His dusty wares, but all in vain,
For there is none will buy.

The sceptre, crown and ring and gown —
Thus held of little worth —
He sealed up in a casket
And he laid them in the earth.

“ When this, our twentieth century,
Is buried in the past,”
He said, “ my children’s children
May dig these up at last,

And then as curiosities
I’m sure they will be prized —
As relics of a time before
Mankind was civilized ;

When nations had to have their toys
And all such silly things
As thrones and crowns and ermine gowns
And emperors and kings."

.
The pedlar has no wares to sell ;
He's old and bent and lame ;
But a light is in the beggar's eyes ;
A parchment with his name

Lies in the buried casket
Sealed with the royal ring,
And he hopes his children's children
Will believe he was a king.

THE LAND OF UPSIDE DOWN

The pleasantest place that I ever have known
Is the magical country of Upside Down.
I could sit on the bank forever and ever
And gaze into fairyland down in the river.
The hills and the trees and the houses and
 meadows
Are peaceful and cool in the land of the
 shadows,
But whenever the water is touched by the wand
Of the wind — good-bye to my fairyland !

I wonder whether if I should drown
I'd live in the land of Upside Down,
With my head on the floor and my feet on the
 ceiling.
That might be a very uncomfortable feeling ;
But there's this advantage — I'd climb the
 trees

By sliding down them with perfect ease.
But how could I possibly drink from a cup
I was holding so funnily down side up ?

But this is the hardest puzzle for me ; —
How can the very highest tree
In shallow water be straight and tall
As tho there were no river bottom at all ?
And the sky is as far away down there
As the real sky is that is up in the air !
More mysterious — much — than Reality
 Town
Is the land that I love of Upside Down.

LOVE IS NOT WHOLLY LOST

Love is not wholly lost to my possessing,
For often, when I rouse in sweet unrest
From dreams that have restored to me the
blessing
Of your dear, tender form against me pressed,
My hand, that sleep stirred to its old caressing,
Curves to the delicate roundness of your
breast.

Oh, precious gesture ! In the fear of waking
Fully to loss and loneliness and cold,
I keep my fingers curved till — hope forsaking
My yearning hand — I know that in my hold
Is nothingness ; that, tho my heart is breaking,
You still remain beneath the leaves and
mould.

SILENCE

What do I love the dearest in my wood ?
The holly berries red
That swing their censers to the sun ? The bed
Of violets as white as virgin's snood ?
The gauzy humming-bird ?
The scurrying insect-life when moss is stirred
By an inquiring hand ?
The odors that the balmy south wind brings ?
The brown pine-needles carpeting the land
Richer than any rug from Samarcand ?
Oh dearly, dearly do I love these things !
And yet, of all, I love the silence best —
The silence of the wood —
That gently seems to nest
And nestle in the over-burdened heart ;
Soft as the feathered breast
Of yonder thrush that hovers near her brood ;
Silence that soothes the ache and pain and
smart
Of life's swift lash laid on the quivering soul.
It is a chalice full of sanctities ;
It is a benediction breathing peace.
It is as calm, as deep,

As cool green wells of sleep
In which the spirit sinks and is made whole.
And if from some bird-throat a sudden rill
Of sound may flow,
It is but etched against the stillness so
That all the wood seems even more deeply still.
Yet most for this I love the silence best,
That it is big with longings unexpressed
And lyric with unutterable song ;
Astir with winds and wings
That ever with their soundless whisperings
Uplift my heart and make my spirit strong.
For silence is as wide
And boundless as the wide and boundless sea :
It flows around me in a mighty tide
Of vast beatitude.
Oh, may I ever live upon the shore
Of its beneficent immensity
That, when life's clamor grows too harsh and
rude,
I may steal forth to the great quietude ;
That I may feel its healing waters pour
Over my tired soul and wash it clean
Of trivial things and mean !
And thus it is the silence of the wood,
The silence of renewal and of rest,
That I love best ;
Silence that is to-day enfolding me
And in its bosom holds eternity !

DISGUISES

I saw a lissome form that sped
As swift as flame thro field and wood,
And whither her light footsteps led
Led the desire within my blood,
Until upon a distant hill
Weary she stood to wait my will.

“Joy, you are mine at last !” I cried :
“I’ve followed you o’er moor and lea
And I have won you for my bride.”
Slowly she turned her face to me : —
Alas, not Joy but Grief I pressed
With rapture to my eager breast.

And when one came in mantle clad
Of sober grey with veiled face,
I knew not that her eyes were glad
And turned me cold from her embrace :
Too late the sudden moonlight shone
Revealing Joy — and she was gone !

Thus when upon some night of gloom
And mist, I hear upon my door
A knock, and see a figure loom
In Death’s habiliments before
My fading eyes, oh may it be
Life’s face, not Death’s, that turns to me !

SO, IT HAS COME . . .

So, it has come — this horror that shall gnaw
In cruel hunger my defenceless breast,
The home of all my tenderness where nest
My dearest hopes and loves. The tooth and
claw

Of agony shall rend me and shall draw
My courage drop by drop, till, all possessed
Of fear, my soul shall be at last the jest,
The sport, of pain. . . . No ! No ! Not
that ! I saw

For one black moment, with a coward's eye,
Only defeat. My soul shall never lie
Cringing to flesh — the soul that I inherit
From dauntless thousands that have dared to
die !

I summon all the legions of my spirit
To march with me to death and victory !

TO A GIRL OF THE STREETS WHO BEFRIENDED FRANCIS THOMPSON

(Finding the poet in dire distress, she gave him food and shelter and tender care, then vanished out of his life, leaving no trace. He celebrates her in "Sister Songs.")

Frail flower and pale and pitiful
That any passer-by might cull
Out of the London dust, and wear
A fleeting moment if he found it fair,
Then with indifferent, careless gesture fling
Forth to the wind to be blown withering
Thro noisome ways where never flash of wing
Is seen or blue of sky or green of spring,
And night lurks ever in the baleful air : —

Poor child ! Poor lost one ! — Lovingest,
tender thing
He called you whom you found so sore be-sted
And succored, helped and healed ;
For whom you broke your scanty, shameful
bread,
Knowing but this — that he had suffered wrong
And that he seemed unloved, uncomforted,
Needing your ministering.

And all the while a rich red rose of song
Lay on his breast beneath his rags concealed.

Did some sweet subtle perfume of it, borne
Upon you keeping vigil, serve to start
The tears of wistful wonder in your eyes,
The throb of understanding in your heart ?
Whence was the knowledge that could make
you wise

To see the rose was his and yours the thorn ?
Did sudden light from some revealing star
Shine on his sleeping brow,
Stabbing your brain with its keen scimitar
To realization full of pain and woe ?
Mayhap he muttered half-remembered prayers
Dreaming and fevered and you heard, and knew
You entertained an angel unawares.
Howe'er you saw the truth, you too were true.

You too were true and so you would not stay.
Your farewell silenced on a stricken tongue,
Dumbly you crept away,
Leaving the singer to his lonely song.
Whatever dark unhallowed paths of sin
Your weary feet since then have wandered in,
His song has made you pure and you are
shriven.

He places you, a flower,
Again in the bright coronal of spring,

No more to be blown wilted thro the street,
On dusty, sullen breezes tossed and driven,
Worn for a passing hour,
Then trampled beneath hurrying, pitiless feet ;
But evermore to bloom unwithering
In virgin freshness beautiful and sweet.

TO A HOLLY TREE

I thought these frozen woods were grey and
quiet —

So bare of beauty that the heart would find
Within them solace, rest and sanctuary ;

But here behold you standing in a riot

Of startling and unsympathetic red,

As tho the magic wand

Of a tormenting fairy

Had summoned you from some far tropic land

To flare and flame

Amid the ashes of the winter's dead

Before my weary and reluctant eyes !

I am too tired to bear your loveliness :

Then why distract my mind

With restless thought I fain had left behind

In the uneasy world ? Have you no shame

That you in wanton wise

Your clamorous, insistent beauty press

Upon my sight ? . . . Ah, well, another time

I shall find rest — in other land and clime

Mayhap, not here alas, for beauty here

In March — June — April, is too penetrant,

Too poignant for the heart to gain release.

And now December, that I thought was sere
And dun and drab, with all her trees in rags,
Produces you, disturber of the peace ! . . .
You conquer ! See ! I yield me to delight
In your triumphant beauty burning bright !
All thoughts of rest avaunt !

The banners — courage, hope and faith, you
 flaunt

In splendid scarlet challenge to despair.

Then let my spirit fling out all its flags

To stream with yours upon the inspired air !

MY INSTANT

Because thro twenty times ten million years
The earth has hung in starry space, yet I
Have but an hour wherein to live and die —
An instant only, shall I dim with tears
My glimpse of earth ? Shall hesitations, fears
And doubts confound me, or despair defy ?
No ! Rather shall my voice be lifted high
In thankfulness that all of time's arrears
Are paid me in the instant that gives sun
And moon to me, that makes the wild winds
mine
To ride upon. I am a part of thee —
Spirit of Beauty, spirit of Splendor, one
In flower and flame ! A moment I am
thine : —
Could all eternity give more to me ?

UNREALITY

On the banks of the river a willow,
The daughter of earth and of air,
Is wooed by the wind's caresses
And the sun has found her fair.

But remote in the clear cool water
From the kiss of the wind or the sun,
Elusive, her sister of shadows
Is chaste as a cloistered nun.

Tender the shade that enfolds her,
Limpid the light and serene : —
A willow in shimmering water
Is green as no other is green.

The tree in the river is silent,
The bird-songs all unsung,
But sweet to the heart is the music
That never may find a tongue.

Oh, lovely the shadowy image
In the liquid dusk of the stream —
Unreality mystic, enchanting,
With the lure of desire and of dream !

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

(Extracts from the Diaries of a Country Woman and a City Woman.)

(City Woman)

The First of February.

Snow and ice
Are holding all the city in a vice
Of cursèd quiet at the season's height.
No matinee ! No tea ! No bridge tonight !
And this the sunny South !

(Country Woman)

The snow and hail
Induced my trees last night to take the veil.
With reverent heads they stand as tho they
were
A sainted congregation bowed in prayer.
I love this nunnery, with the winter hush
Upon it !

(City Woman)

Fifth of February.

This slush
Is so unhealthy ! Delicate Annette
Has been house-bound for days. How she
does fret !

(Country Woman)

I believe the snow is sent like Santa Claus
Just for the children. It has been the cause
Today of such a frolic ! We've been shaking
The trees to save their laden boughs from
 breaking,
And many a merry snow-storm of our making
Has fallen on an unsuspecting head.
The children came in tingling, rosy-red.

(City Woman)

March Fifth.

 I took Annette to see a show : —
The child must be amused, and so we go
To " movies," tho " soul mates " and soulful
 kisses
Are all too educational, I know,
For little girls of eight. I hope she misses
At such a picture half the meaning of it.

(Country Woman)

Arbutus ! I'm so glad my children love it !
All six of them and I had searched together
The morning long, because we thought this
 weather
Might coax it out. We found some, shy and
 pink,

In the dead leaves. What could I do but sink
Down on the earth (tho my own secret this)
And touch the dear wee blossoms with a kiss ?

(City Woman)

March Tenth.

The spring has come ! Gwen
Vanderloo

Appeared in a straw hat — a fine one too,
With a real bird of Paradise. I'm weary
Of winter clothes, they look so drab and dreary !
I'm glad the spring has come.

(Country Woman)

The spring ! The spring !
I knew it by the sudden quickening
Of one bright bluebird's long-expectant wing :
Besides, I asked him, and his answer duly
Came with the sweet assurance — " Tru-ly !
Tru-ly ! "

(City Woman)

April the First.

It's raining. What a pity !
I can't go shopping in this deluged city.
I must sit moping here until it clears.

(Country Woman)

When April, the light-hearted, sheds her tears
They seem like laughter ! I have watched all
day

The long bright busy needles of the rain
Stitching in Nature's wide-spread counterpane
Patterns of flowers to deck the bed of May.
I think these April showers wash every stain
Of age from Earth, making her young again.

(City Woman)

May the Fifteenth.

Gwen Vanderloo is dead !
She lived too hard and fast, the doctors said.
The trouble was exhaustion. What a whirl
This life is ! Young and care-free as a girl,
She's gone ! The funeral is to-day. I'll send
A wreath of lilies, but I must attend
Two meetings first, and I'll invite a friend
To lunch to cheer me up. I must not waste
A single minute, I am in such haste !
They'll put Gwen in the city cemetery :
It's bare and cold, but fashionable — very.
I do hope nobody will tell Annette
That Gwen is dead, she fears death so, the
pet !

(Country Woman)

Our kind old neighbor, Ellen Jones, is dead.
Why grieve ? Or why regret ? Her life was
 led
In useful leisure and in busy peace
Among her flowers, beneath her sheltering
 trees.
I took the children, wishing them to see
How lovely and how tender death can be.
Cedars may mourn, but let the holly wave
Its happy scarlet flags above her grave !

TO A HERMIT THRUSH

Great lyricist, you sing of vanished ships
Whose spirits haunt the mist-enshrouded dune,
Or of long-dead, forgotten lovers' lips
That drank their draughts of joy beneath the
moon ;

Of Cleopatra's form, of Helen's face,
Of Caesar's fame : Egypt and Greece and
Rome
You know not, but all glory and all grace
Within your cosmic strains are gathered home.

And I who feel within my aching breast
Your own wild, sweet necessity to sing —
When clouds, rose-petalled, blossom in the west
Or when arbutus buds are pink with spring,

I must delay and grope for speech, with art
Striving — in vain — to capture ecstasy ;
While unrestrained you pour your lyric heart —
Your lyric soul itself — upon the sky,

So clearly soars your pure, celestial song
Above poor human need of stammering words.
Ah, that is poetry ! Speech does beauty wrong.
I think there are no poets save the birds.

THE TURN OF THE ROAD

I swing today on Gallows Hill
Because one maid was fair.
Because her teeth were white as milk,
Because her skin was smooth as silk,
I swing today on Gallows Hill
With none to heed or care.

Why did she stand at the turn of the road
That forked to east and west ?
“ I seek the way to the Temple of Fame,”
I said. She smiled with a mouth like flame
As she pointed the way to Gallows Hill.
A curse on the curve of her breast !

To west, to east, and the choice must be
Forever, for good or ill.
Now answer me, God, if you can, if you dare,
And answer me, man, is it fair, is it fair,
Because one maid had a mouth like flame,
Because her skin was white as milk,
Because her hair was fine as silk,
That I who was seeking the Temple of Fame
Should swing on Gallows Hill ?

WHY DO YOU IDLE ?

“ Why do you idle by a woodland stream
Singing alone, aloof, while nations lie
Stricken and prostrate ? Think you that the
gleam
Of moon or star will warm them ? Would you
try
To nourish starving men with melody ? ”
Thus they who plow the furrow and sew the
seam
Challenge my peace. “ We summon you,”
they cry,
“ To labor with us. Dreamer, cease to
dream ! ”

Scorn me not, brothers ! Know that while
you spin
The flax to cover shivering flesh, I weave
Fabric of dreams to clothe the soul within.
Toiling at plow and harrow you relieve
The hunger of the body. I, apart,
Seek with my song to feed the famished heart.

RENAISSANCE

Asleep lay lovely Poesy
Upon a liliated bed :
Pale lilies on her heart had she,
Pale lilies at her head,
And lily-white her drapery
Upon the sward was spread.

As chill her breast as marble, deep
Her slumber as a swoon ;
And still the virgin lilies keep
Their watch from noon to noon.
Stifled with fragrance she must sleep,
Tho sun may shine or moon.

Life waked and wooed her in the glade : —
“ Behold the gifts I bring !
Here is a homespun gown,” he said,
“ And here a wedding-ring
Wrought out of iron that was made
Where forge-fires leap and sing.”

She laid her draperies aside,
She flung her lilies down,

And holding high her head in pride
She donned the ring and gown.
With Life she passed, his wedded bride,
Eager from town to town.

He showed her beauty in the dust
Where men lay grovelling ;
In crooked hands that begged a crust,
As in a bluebird's wing ;
He taught her that from hate and lust
White flowers of truth might spring.

And now she walks mid toil and strife —
Whom lilies lulled to rest.
Oh, beautiful she is as wife
In humble homespun dressed
As evermore she follows Life,
Red roses on her breast.

MASKS

We sat before our hearth-fire, you and I,
Secure behind our guardian bolts and bars
From lonely winds, from darkness, from the cry
Of owls and the cold shining of the stars.

I thought : — without is mystery, vastness,
stark,
Unknowable ; within, your form and face.
I hold you known against the unknown dark,
My only hostage against time and space.

Let night flow round me ! I am unafraid :
You give me all the certainty I ask.
I turned to you. A gleam of firelight played
Upon your face and lo, you wore a mask !

“ What ! You ? Even you ? ” I cried, “ Not
yours that brow,
Those lips that I have loved ? Through all
the years
You have looked at me, as you are looking now,
With eyes whose painted laughter, painted
tears,

Have mocked me ! I will tear that smile
away."

In vain my trembling hands attempt the task.
You point me to the mirror. I obey
And see that on my face I wear a mask.

WHY ARE THE DEAD NOT DEAD ?

Why are the dead not dead indeed who crowd
Upon me, thus insistent in demands
On my remembrance ? Why are pale, cold
hands

Thrust from enfolding mist as from a shroud
To clutch my heart ? In moon and fire and
cloud

I see lost faces and on desolate sands
I hear long-silent footfalls. To far lands
They follow — follow still. I am allowed
No respite — none — no ease from memory's
sadness.

You dead, you loved me once, then grant me
one —

Only one hour — of sheer unshadowed glad-
ness,

One golden hour of laughter in the sun
Out of a heart whence thoughts of you are
sped. . . .

Then come to me again, belovèd dead.

DEAR, DO I HOPE

Dear, do I hope to find you far beyond
The dawn of day, beyond the reach of years,
Removed from human laughter, human tears ?
Will you in that diviner air respond
To love of mine ? Can some ethereal bond
Endear us as the bond of flesh endears ?
I do not know. My heart is filled with fears,
I have so loved the foolish ways and fond
Of daily living ; loved your hands and eyes,
Your hair and the deep solace of your breast.
If these were lost, then what were loving
worth ?

My lips on yours, I almost hope the skies
Beyond our sky will yield us only rest,
Lest heaven be cold to this, our heaven on
earth !

THE VASE

I fain would have my verse a vase
Clear as a Cyprian sky,
With fair Diana of the chase,
With nymphs and fauns of sylvan grace,
Winding forever round its base
Of veined porphyry.

And I would pour my thoughts like wine
Within the vase, and they
With opalescent light should shine
Of tranquil seas that crystalline
Hold the irradiance divine
Of an eternal day.

Alas for this, my vase ! It seems
A thing with failure fraught.
It can to my desires and dreams
Impart no iridescent gleams ;
No lucent splendor from it streams ;
Of clay my vase is wrought.

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